



Local Programs Procedures

LPP 94-06 Revised Policy on Design Exceptions

Reference: Local Programs Manual, Volume I, Section 8

Effective Date: May 20, 1994 Approved: _____
Chief, Office of Local Programs

This procedure modifies the approval process for design exceptions. This revision will be incorporated into the Local Programs Manual (LPM) during the next update.

EXISTING PROCEDURES

In the LPM, Volume I - Section 8, GEOMETRIC, "Caltrans can approve final plans and specifications as long as the design standards contained in this section are followed by the local agency. A Fact Sheet...completed by the District and submitted to the Office of Project Planning and Design is required when a design exception is requested from FHWA. ... Proposed exceptions to the basic design standards must be justified by the local agency and be approved by the FHWA in writing, before the design exceptions can be incorporated in the project."

The procedure in the LPM was revised by memo (dated March 3, 1989, signed by Ron Lemmon) concerning "Interim CRP Procedures - Design Exception/Final Inspection". That memo stated "FHWA has implemented the initial phase in the Combined Road Plan (CRP) procedure by delegating the design exception approvals...to Caltrans...for all FAU, FAS and BR projects" and "Design exception requests will follow the same basic procedures as are currently detailed in the LPM except that the Chief, Office of Local Streets and Roads, Project Management will approve the requests subject to the LSR Area Engineer recommendation and review by specialty units, traffic, structures, etc., when applicable." Pursuant to recent reorganization, design exceptions are currently the responsibility of the Chief, District Coordination Branch, Office of Local Programs (OLP).

NEW PROCEDURES

The design standards used for any projects, except bikeway projects, shall meet AASHTO standards contained in "A Policy on Geometric Design of Highway and Streets 1990" to the maximum extent feasible. For bikeway projects, Chapter 1000 of the Caltrans Highway Design Manual shall be used. For resurfacing,

restoration, and rehabilitation (3R) projects, the "Minimum Standards for Geometric Design of Federal-Aid Resurfacing, Restoration and Rehabilitation Projects on Local Streets and Roads" dated October 1988, as applicable or subsequent approved revisions, shall be used. The design standards must take into account costs, traffic volumes, traffic and safety benefits, right of way, socioeconomic and environmental impacts, etc. This philosophy provides the use of lower standards when such use best satisfies the concerns of a given situation. Because FHWA approval of design exceptions on exempt projects has now been delegated to Caltrans and since local agencies are in a better position to assess applicability to any given situation on local roads, certain design exception approval authority is now delegated to city/county public works directors. This delegation applies to local agency exempt projects in the following categories: federal-aid funded projects not on the National Highway System (NHS), federal-aid projects on the NHS less than \$1 million, and 3R projects on the NHS regardless of size. Also, this delegation applies only if the public works director is a registered civil engineer in the State of California. Public works directors cannot delegate this approval authority within their local agency. Approval of the design exception on federal-aid projects shall be signed by the public works director.

Non-geometric design standard exceptions related to bridge, large culvert and seismic design will continue to be submitted through the district for review and approval by Caltrans' OLP and Division of Structures.

This delegation of design exception is only for local agency projects not on the state highway system. Local agency projects on the state highway system shall continue to use the design exception procedure outlined in Caltrans' "Design Manual."

Delegation of design exceptions is limited to geometric design, and safety and drainage design. This includes the 13 controlling criteria for geometric design as follows:

1. Design Speed
2. Lane Width
3. Shoulder Width
4. Bridge Width
5. Structural Capacity
6. Horizontal Alignment
7. Vertical Alignment
8. Grades
9. Stopping Sight Distance
10. Cross Slopes
11. Super Elevation
12. Horizontal Clearance
13. Vertical Clearance

Local agencies are required to submit design exception forms approved by the Public Works Director as part of the PS&E review. To facilitate the District Local Assistance Engineers' process reviews, local agencies are also required to keep copies of design exceptions in their project files. If any local agency fails to submit required design exception forms their delegation to approve future design exceptions may be rescinded. In addition, failure to complete and file design exceptions can result in loss of Design Certification for those local agencies operating under Design Certification.

The standard design exception information form, contained in the LPM, Volume I - Section 8, should continue to be used. Design exception approvals should consist of the following required documentation as described in the LPM, Volume I - Section 8, Exhibit 08-1c, the Fact Sheet, FHWA Design Exception Instruction.

1. Existing Conditions
2. Proposed Work and Non-Standard Features
3. Standard for Which Exception is Required
4. Accidents
5. Design Year Traffic Volumes
6. Added Cost to Make Standard
7. Description of Any Additional Work to Enhance Safety
8. Reason for Requesting Exception
9. Reviews
10. Signed, Stamped With Engineer's Seal, and Approved by Director of Public Works

A tracking system for design exceptions should be implemented by local agencies to retrieve project information quickly and accurately. The database should include:

- Project Description
- Project Location
- Non-Standard Features Approved
- Indication if Future Commitments Have Been Made
- Brief Description of Commitments to Upgrade the Project to Design Standards at a Future Date